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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
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10/618,750

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Takashi Azuma

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ANTONELLI, TERRY, STOUT & KRAUS, LLP
1300 NORTH SEVENTEENTH STREET
SUITE 1800
ARLINGTON, VA 22209-3873

EXAMINER

CHENG, JACQUELINE

ART UNIT

PAPER NUMBER

3768

MAIL DATE

DELIVERY MODE

10/05/2007

PAPER

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

10/618,750

Applicant(s)

AZUMA ET AL.

Examiner

Jacqueline Cheng

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-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 05 June 2007.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-4,6-8,10-15 and 17-27 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☒ Claim(s) 22-25 is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-4,6-8,10-15,17,19-21,26 and 27 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☒ Claim(s) 18 is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☐ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application
- 6) ☐ Other: _____

DETAILED ACTION

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 101

35 U.S.C. 101 reads as follows:

Whoever invents or discovers any new and useful process, machine, manufacture, or composition of matter, or any new and useful improvement thereof, may obtain a patent therefor, subject to the conditions and requirements of this title.

Claims 1-4, 6-8, 10-15, 17, 26, and 27 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 101 because the claimed invention is directed to non-statutory subject matter.

On October 26, 2005, the USPTO published Interim Guidelines for Examination of Patent Applications for Patent Subject Matter Eligibility. See:

(http://www.uspto.gov/web/offices/pac/dapp/opla/preognotice/guidelines101_20051026.pdf)

This guidelines details a procedure for determining patent eligible subject matter. As to claims 1-4, 6-8, 10-15, 17, 26, and 27 the first step in this process is whether the claims fall within one of enumerated categories. In the immediate application, the claims are drawn to a machine – a ultrasonic imaging system – and meets this step. However, the analysis does not end here. The next step is whether a judicial exception (abstract ideas, laws of nature, natural phenomenon) is provided in the claim. In the immediate application, all claims mentioned clearly includes one of the judicial exceptions in that “transmitting signals”, “obtaining”, “calculating”, “extracting”, etc are nothing more than abstract ideas. While abstract ideas alone are not eligible, the claim as a whole must be analyzed to determine whether it is for a particular application of the abstract idea. For claims including such excluded subject matter to be eligible, the claim must be for a practical application of the abstract idea, law of nature, or natural phenomena. To satisfy the requirement of a practical application, the claimed invention must:

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(1) transform an article or physical object to a different state or thing; if no transformation, then

(2) the claimed invention must produce a useful, concrete, and tangible result.

Regarding (1) above, the claims do not provide a transformation or reduction of an article to a different state or thing. Transmitting signals, obtaining, extracting and calculating things clearly do not transform an article or physical object to a different state or thing. Accordingly, one must then consider whether the claimed invention produces a useful, concrete, and tangible result.

(a) Useful Result - For an invention to be “useful” it must satisfy the utility requirement of section 101. The USPTO’s official interpretation of the utility requirement provides that the utility of the invention has to be (i) specific, (ii) substantial and (iii) credible. See MPEP 2107.

Regarding the use result requirement, it can be argued that the claim does not provide a useful result in that the claim does not actually come to any useful result. Just manipulating signals in not useful and does not solve a problem unless something is done, or something useful comes out of the manipulating of signalsy.

(b) Tangible Result - The tangible requirement does not necessarily mean that a claim must either be tied to a particular machine or apparatus or must operate to change articles or materials to a different state or thing. However, the tangible requirement does require that the claim must recite more than a 101 judicial exception, in that the process claim must set forth a practical application of that 101 judicial exception to produce a real world result.

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Regarding the tangible result requirement, the claim clearly does not provide a practical application for reasons similar to that discussed above. For example what is the practical application of manipulating signals if nothing is to be done with the end result?

(c) Concrete Result - Another consideration is whether the invention produces a “concrete” result. Usually, this question arises when a result cannot be assured. In other words, the process must have a result that can be substantially repeatable or the process must substantially produce the same result again. Resolving this question is dependent on the level of skill in the art. For example, if the claimed invention is for a process which requires a particular skill, to determine whether the process is substantially repeatable will necessarily require a determination of the level of skill of the ordinary skilled artisan.

Regarding the concrete result requirement, the claim does not provide a result that can be assured in that the result can not be substantially repeatable and the process can not substantially produce the same result again. In fact there is no result, just a manipulation of signals.

In view of the above analysis, applicant’s claims 1-4, 6-8, 10-15, 17, 26, and 27 are a machine that includes a judicial exception therein. Upon review of the claims as a whole, there is no transformation nor does the claim produce a useful, concrete, and tangible result.

Accordingly, the claim is non-statutory under 35 U.S.C. 101.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112

1. The following is a quotation of the second paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

The specification shall conclude with one or more claims particularly pointing out and distinctly claiming the subject matter which the applicant regards as his invention.

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2. **Claims 1, 6, 8, 12, 14, 17, 19, 20, 26, and 27** are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention.

3. The claims are generally narrative and indefinite, failing to conform with current U.S. practice. They appear to be a literal translation into English from a foreign document and are replete with grammatical and idiomatic errors, and of run-on confusing phrases.

Claim Objections

4. **Claims 1-4, 6-8, 10-15, 17, 18 and 27** are objected to because they seem to try to invoke 35 U.S.C. 112, sixth paragraph of means plus function. The claims do not invoke means plus function as they do not include the phrase "means for" or "step for". Appropriate correction is required to either clearly invoke 35 U.S.C. 112, sixth paragraph or to clearly not invoke it.

Allowable Subject Matter

5. **Claims 22-25** are allowed.

Conclusion

6. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Jacqueline Cheng whose telephone number is 571-272-5596. The examiner can normally be reached on M-F 10:00-6:30.

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If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Eleni Mantis-Mercader can be reached on 571-272-4740. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

7. Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

JC


ELENI MANTIS MERCADER
SUPERVISORY PATENT EXAMINER